

The BLACK BOX

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Author of "Mr. Grey of Monte Carlo," "The Vanished Messenger," "The Lighted Way," etc.

Reviewed from the motion picture drama of the same name produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company. Illustrated with photographs from the motion picture production.

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SYNOPSIS.

In her apartment at the Lebed Hills, Langford Quest, although it is rumored that she is engaged in some secret work for the New York police, places the mysterious hands of Edward Quest, known and feared as the master criminologist of the world, at her side. She is a woman of many accomplishments and through her genius and the use of clairvoyant appliances she succeeds in connection with the police in solving many cases. Her secret is that she is a woman who has been many times trapped by her desire to make certain known while enclosed in the walls.

SECOND INSTALLMENT.

"THE HIDDEN HANDS."

CHAPTER VI.

Edward Quest and Lenora stood side by side upon the steps of the courthouse, waiting for the automobile which had become momentarily entangled in a string of vehicles. A little crowd of people were showing their way off to the sidewalk. The faces of most of them were still shadowed by the three hours of tense drama from which they had just emerged. Quest, who had lit a cigar, watched them curiously.

"We need to go into court," he remarked. "I could have told you, from the look of these people, that she would have escaped the death sentence. They have paid their money—or rather their time—and they have been cleared of the supreme thrill."

"Imprisonment for life seems terribly enough," Lenora whispered, shuddering.

"Can't see the sense of keeping such an alive myself," Quest declared, his purposeful brutality. "It was a kind murder, fluently committed."

"We were on the point of creating the assassin toward the assassination when Quest left a room upon his telephone. He turned and found Lenora standing by his side. She was smiling at him.

"Come and sit in the car," he suggested. "I will do there what I cannot do here." And so they sat, and he said, "My love," said Lenora again, "my brother is very anxious to see his reconciliation with you. Come back next year."

Edward Quest held out his hand to the man who had been standing a distance in the background. Lord Ashleigh turned towards him.

"This is Mr. Quest, Edgar. You must remember my brother—Professor Ashleigh—as a man of science, Quest? He has just returned from South America."

The two shook hands, curiously diverse in type, in expression, in all the appurtenances of manhood.

"I am very proud to make your acquaintance again, professor," Quest said. "Glad to know, too, that you haven't forgotten me."

"My dear sir," the professor declared, as he released the other's hand with seeming reluctance. "I have thought about you many times. Your doings have always been of interest to me."

"I am sorry," Quest remarked, "that on our first meeting here should be under such distressing circumstances."

The professor nodded gravely.

"If you'll excuse me, professor," said Quest. "I think I must be getting along. We shall meet again, I trust."

"One moment," the professor begged, eagerly. "Tell me, Mr. Quest—I want your honest opinion. What do you think of my ape?"

"Off your what?" Quest inquired dubiously.

"Of my anthropoid ape which I have just sent to the museum. You know the claim? But perhaps you would prefer to postpone your final decision until after you have examined the skeleton itself."

A light broke in upon the criminologist.

"Of course," he exclaimed. "For the moment, professor, I couldn't follow you. You are talking about the skeleton of the ape which you brought from South America, and which you have presented to the museum here?"

Naturally the professor assented with mild surprise. "So what else?" I am stating my case, Mr. Quest, in the North American Review next month. I may tell you, however, as a fellow scientist, the great and absolute truth. My claim is incontestable. My skeleton will prove to the world, without a doubt, the absolute truth of Darwin's great theory."

"That so?"

"You must go and see it," the professor insisted. "You shall be permitted a special examination."

"Very kind of you," Quest mused.

"We shall meet again soon, I hope," the professor responded cordially. "Good-bye, Mr. Quest."

The young man shook hands and Quest took his seat by Lenora's side in the armchair. The professor rejoiced in his leather.

They entered the parlors and were soon alone in silence to the professor. Some—a large, rambling abode situated in somewhat extensive lawns and grounds on the outskirts of New York. The Englishman glanced

thoughtfully around the room, glancing out of each of the windows in turn. He kept close to the wall, and when he had finished he drew out a magnifying glass from his pocket and made a brief examination of the box. Then he asked a few questions of the curio, pointed out one of the windows to Lenora and whispered a few directions to her. She at once produced what seemed to be a four-rupee note from the bag which she was carrying, and hurried into the garden.

"A little invention of my own for measuring footprints," Quest explained. "Not much use here, I am afraid."

Quest stood over the bag for a moment or two and looked once more out of the window. Presently Lenora returned. She carried in her hand a small object which she brought silently to Quest. He glanced at it in perplexity. The professor rested over his shoulder.

"It is the little finger," he cried. "The little finger of my ape."

Quest bent it away from him, examining it.

"From which hand?" he asked.

"The right hand."

Quest examined the fastenings of the window before which he paused during his greeting examination. He turned back with a smile of the shoulders.

"See you later, Mr. Ashleigh," he concluded laconically.

A slender man in a paper hat them. Quest gazed at the headlines. Lenora clasped at his arm. Together they read it in great black type.

ESCAPE OF CONVICTED PHIS ONE!

Mandalay, on His Way to Prison. Grappling With Sheriff and Jumps From Train Still at Large, Though Searched By Police of Police.

CHAPTER VII.

The windows of Mrs. Rheinholdt's front house were filled with fruit. A crimson drapery screened down the steps to the entrance. A long row of automobiles stood waiting. Through the vestibule door was visible a pleasant impression of flowers and light and beauty. In the center of the large reception room Mrs. Rheinholdt herself, a gaunt dark-brown woman and in the prime of life, was smiling to receive her guests. Her countenance was not without certain decided features.

"I consider nothing but pleasure," she remarked, "as far as receiving guests is concerned."

"I am so glad you are interested, professor," he said. "I cannot tell you how much I can do for you. You will find us here to help you in every way."

"I am so glad you are interested," the professor responded. "I consider nothing but pleasure."

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